

P.D. Queue: A Modern Evocation of Moll Flanders,
Pamela Andrews, Joseph Andrews, and Tom Jones

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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An Apology to the Reader

After having read four novels which were written during the eighteenth century (i. e., Pamela, Moll Flanders, Tom Jones, and Joseph Andrews), I have attempted to extract certain characteristics from each of them and, in conjunction with the diverse title characters, combine them to produce a "creative project" of my own. Included in the group of characteristics are the narrator's address to the "dear reader" which is stated or implied by Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding; the moralizing and judgement of characters by the narrator of each work; the justification of the work as being historically factual; the form of a journal upon which Pamela is structured; the utilization of the name of the hero (heroine) as the novel's title; and, among many other minute details, the characteristics of each of the title characters themselves. I have placed Pamela and Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Moll Flanders, along with a character of my own imagination within a contemporary situation which ultimately resolves itself quickly and with the usual shocking revelations of the eighteenth century novel. However, in developing my own work, I fell into the trap that also snared Fielding as he wrote Joseph Andrews; that is, I became involved with the relating of my own narrative to a greater degree than I had anticipated prior to composing it. Thus, my work, P.D. Queue, bears both the strong and the weak elements of the eighteenth-century novel, even though it was penned within the twentieth century.

P.D. Queue

Nowadays, it is very difficult to find accounts of actual events that are not only believable, but also easy to follow. My chronicle, however, is one such rare literary specimen; that is, it concerns the actual occurrences of one day in the life of a not-so-well-known private detective, and as to its credibility -- well, dear reader, I will allow you to formulate your own opinion. As the recorder of this factual data, however, I can assure you that my straightforward narration is not an attempt to beguile the gullible. The fidelity of an historian obliges me to relate what hath been confidently asserted concerning this day's -- nay, this single morning's -- happenings. Thus, with this justification of my ambitions, along with an implicit appeal to your patience and common sense, I reveal to you, dear reader, my narrative.

The dreary December rain pushed listlessly against the only window that interrupted the flow of walls in the fourth floor office of P.D. Queue, Private Investigator. Having joined the staff of London Lookers, Limited, of London, England, only ten years ago, he was still considered by his senior partners to be the least important and hence rated this dimly-lit hole for an office. P.D. didn't mind having the company of shadows and drafts that played peek-a-boo about his desk, though; not only had he grown accustomed to their temporal and seasonal changes, but both the tea kettle and the men's lounge were conveniently located across the hall. A change in location could feasibly be more an inconvenience to our hero than an improvement. Is it not tragic how we allow the onset of middle age to play havoc with our aesthetic values?

On this inclement and final day of the year, P.D. accidentally arrived at work on time. Having nothing else to do but wait for his efficient secretary to bring him the morning newspaper (which, as usual, she brought in fifteen

minutes late in order to be on time for P.D.'s first cup of tea), the sleuth settled comfortably back in his desk chair, propped his feet up on the low file cabinet, and attempted to talk himself into becoming enthusiastic about the quickly-approaching new year. Failing at this attempt, he drifted off into a light slumber, his head nodding in time to the slow, rhythmic tapping of the rain. This then, dear reader, is a short, candid look at our hero on a typical workday morning. It is true that he should be a bit more aggressive and ambitious about his career, and his physical characteristics leave much to be desired (although his mother always tells how P.D. won the "Most Adorable Baby Contest" when he was just a year old, omitting to mention, of course, that her brother-in-law's cousin judged the competition). For this reason, I will not bother to sketch the appearance of this short, balding, almost-flabby bachelor, nor concern you, dear reader, with any personal facts about him. After all, I merely want to tell you about this single morning in his life and leave you to wonder about his opinion of anarchy and liver with onions and all of the other details that a biographer concerns his readers with. Let us, therefore, move on to note the human whirlwind that suddenly gushed into P.D.'s cell.

"O I shall run mad! O that I could but command my hands to tear my eyes out and my flesh off! You must help me to find her! You just have to find her before it's too late!" cried the handsome young man breathlessly, jerking P.D. out of his peaceful doze.

Let us pause once more, dear reader, to take a close look at this intruder as he stands, drippingly desparate, before our hero. Although his stature has been compared by many of his admirers to that of the statue of David, let it suffice to say that he was adequately endowed with beauty. His innocent face had a quality of goodness which coordinated well with his almost-perfect body and which successfully duped many of his acquaintances. Because he appeared to be so sincerely good and morally sound, everyone immediately assumed that his

looks were a clever mask for a character that writhed with pulsating evil. However, the visitor really was as good as he appeared to be and, consequently, found it hard to make friends with anyone beyond the circumference of his family circle. This beautiful and friendless gentleman (for, by his raiment, it was apparent that he was a gentleman of considerable wealth) now waits breathlessly for P.D. to focus his consciousness on his plea for aid.

"What's that you say, sir?" P.D. yawned, gradually attaining alertness.

"In other words, sir, I want you to find my sister. I'm desperately afraid that something terrible has happened to her because she has disappeared," the stranger petitioned.

"Well, please take off your wet coat and have a chair here. Would you care for a cup of tea? It'll rid you of your chill," P.D. counselled.

"Yes, thank you. I'm sure that would be fine," he accepted.

P.D. scurried across the hall. He always scurried when he walked; as a boy, he acquired the habit in order to keep up with his older brother who was always trying to lose him before they arrived at the empty lot on Temple Street where the daily game of soccer was played, hopefully without P.D., from his brother's viewpoint. Now P.D. scurried in an attempt to burn up more calories than his preferred leisurely stroll consumed. He was about to give up on maintaining this dietless exercise, though, because it seemed to him that the faster he scurried, the faster the roll around his waist grew. Alas, how true this is for many of us who desire the figure of a graceful swimmer but who have the willpower of a spineless jellyfish.

At any rate, P.D. entered his office quickly, shutting the door as quietly as the oil-less hinges would allow; unfortunately, his new client jumped approximately ten and four-fifths inches into the air in fright, colliding with a teacup that had been secured in P.D.'s left hand.

"I'm so sorry to have frightened you, sir," P.D. apologized as he dabbed at

his sleeve.

"That's quite all right. It was my fault. I guess I have been a little jumpy since my sister's disappearance."

Having regained his composure, P.D. moved to his chair behind his desk, handed the remaining cup of tea to his visitor, and settled back into a not-quite-so-comfortable position.

"Now then, tell me all about yourself and your sister's disappearance," P.D. gently encouraged him.

"Well, to begin with, my name is Joseph Andrews, and my unwed sister's name is Mrs. Pamela Andrews. She recently left home, which is in ----shire, to secure a secretarial position in London, and seems to have been missing since last week. (Here, the young man nearly broke down, but, after taking a deep breath, courageously proceeded with his tale.) I brought her diary along with me and will leave it for you to examine, hopeful that, with your insight, you can detect some indication about her present status. Mr. Queue, sir, I implore you to find my dearest Pamela because," he concluded sobbingly, "she is my closest, my most understanding, and my only friend. Please say you'll help me."

After nodding at what P.D. thought were the right times to nod, he reached for the daisy-decorated diary that Joseph had reverently placed before him.

"This writing resembles the scrawl of a rather mature ten-year-old," P.D. thought to himself. This was a shameful comment to be thought by someone like our hero, though; penmanship was not his strong point, either. But, like everyone else, he was quick to criticize that which he knew to be weak within himself.

"Well, Mr. Andrews, I have given it much thought and have decided that I can take on your case," assented P.D. grandly. P.D. liked to do things in a grand manner; it seemed to put a little drama and excitement into a bland "Yes, I will."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," Joseph mumbled gratefully after clearing

his nasal passage in a rather loud manner. He stood up and firmly shook P.D.'s hand.

"Don't hesitate to call me if you need any additional information about dearest Pamela, for it doth not become me to dispute anything, sir, with you, especially concerning a matter of this kind."

P.D. quickly reassured Joseph: "Now, now, don't worry about a thing, Mr. Andrews. We'll get to the bottom of this in a hurry, I'm sure. You just go about your business and I'll be sure to contact you when I hear of anything definite concerning Pamela."

Joseph Andrews walked calmly out of the badly-lit office into the badly-lit hallway, struggling into his wet raincoat and feeling more reassured than he had in days. Reflect, if you will, dear reader, on the many occasions in which we have walked away, just as our friend Joseph does, living renewed with a tenuously-based hope in our hearts. Yet, what right does P.D. have, or anyone have, who guarantees such peace of mind, to profess to have the abilities of a Fairy Godmother? What right does anyone have to promise such hope when there is very little evidence to support these words of encouragement? Alas for many, this is exactly how human nature acts; in times of trouble and woe, we clutch at any thread of hopeful optimism in place of realistic pessimism. It is unfortunate that this weakness -- this need to be secure and fussed over and told that 'everything will be all right' -- is often the cause of more disappointment and grief than the original problem. If only P.D. could have known what he would soon discover about Pamela, he would have been less hasty in his reassurances to Mr. Andrews.

Alone in his office once again, P.D. began to peruse Pamela's journal. The first entry was dated December 9, 1973 -- just twenty-two days ago, he noted.

"I might as well begin trying to draw information from these entries," he mused. "If nothing else, I'll hopefully know who Pamela associated with and her

feelings about them. At any rate, it could be interesting reading." So, on an optimistic note, P.D. began his objective consideration of the writing which I will now, word for word, allow you, dear reader, to examine for yourself.

"December 9, 1973

Dear Diary,

I am beginning this Account just as I am beginning this new Segment of my Life. Ever since my twenty-first Birthday (which was three Months ago), I have dreamed of Nothing else but of coming to London and of living in my very own Apartment. It's not very large -- in fact, it is quite small and the Water Faucet drips just a little in the Kitchen and there doesn't seem to be much Heat here just now, but I am positive that I shall love it. I only wish, Diary, that I didn't have to leave Mummy and Daddy and Jo-Jo (that's what I call my big brother Joseph) in order to come to this exciting City; but, I know that I shall correspond frequently with them and I have already made Plans to visit them at Christmas, so I know that I will soon be back in the Circle of their loving Care.

To-morrow, I will begin my new Job. Oh, Diary, I am so excited! I will do my best to be the most efficient Secretary that Mr. Thomas Jones (that's the name of my Employer) ever hired, so that I shall not be obliged to return back to be a (log upon my dear Parents! I will never be late and I will never take any extra Time for Lunch and I will always make sure that my Work is neatly done and on Time. Oh, I can hardly wait to begin!

Well, Diary, that is all that I have to tell you at the Present. I must send a Note to Mummy and Daddy to let them know that I am safely settled, and then I must get to sleep. It's late already -- 9:23 p.m.! -- and I don't want to start my new Career with a Yawn!

December 10, 1973

Dear Diary,

This Day was most exciting. My new Boss, Mr. Jones, is very handsome, young, patient, understanding, and, best of all, he is very friendly. However, the Woman who showed me all of my Duties was very cold and unfriendly to me. Her Name is Moll Flanders, and she is in the Process of retiring from being Mr. Jones' Secretary. Perhaps that is why she acts as she does towards me; she probably resents me a little for taking over her Job. I understand this Feeling, so I am trying my Best to be friendly to her, although how much better, by good Fame and Integrity, is it to get every one's good Word but one, than by pleasing that one, to make every one else one's Enemy, and be an execrable Creature besides!

I received a Letter from Mummy and Daddy today. They wrote that 'our chief Trouble is, and indeed a very great one, for fear you should be brought to anything dishonest or wicked'. Mummy and Daddy worry a lot, but they are dears. I must write them a Letter and tell them all about my first Day at Work. Mummy and Daddy will be so proud of me!

December 11, 1973

Dear Diary,

My second Day was just as exciting as my first Day at Work. I am learning all about how to duplicate Letters on this phenomenal Machine. The Machine is so complex-looking that it frightened me to think that I will soon have to use it all by myself, but Moll (that's what everyone calls her so why should I be any different, she said when I addressed her as 'Mrs. Flanders') said that I would catch on soon enough.

Speaking of Mrs. F. (for that's what I'll call her in my own Mind -- Mummy always said that I must show proper Respect to my Elders), she seemed to be a

little Bit more friendly to me today. I hope I'm not just thinking wishfully about it, because I really do want her to like me. At first, I was afraid of her; but I am fully satisfied she is very good, and I should have been lost but for her at Work today.

Mr. Jones (I could never call him 'Tom' as he asked me to today. He's my Boss and I would not dare to take such a disrespectful Liberty with him!) was even more friendly today than he was yesterday. He came over to my desk six times to make sure that I was not out of Paper Clips, and he even offered to take me out to Lunch. I refused him, though, because I had brought my Lunch with me and was afraid that the Peanutbutter would cement the Bread if I didn't eat it at Noon. Besides, I think that he dines somewhere that serves Liquor (at least I thought I could detect it on his Breath yesterday Afternoon, but then again, he might have just eaten some Rum Toffee for Dessert). Anyway, I would rather be 'safe than sorry,' as the Saying goes.

December 14, 1973

Dear Diary,

I'm very sorry to have neglected you for these past two Days; however, Nothing really new has occurred. I did get another Letter from Mummy and Daddy yesterday -- of course, they expressed Concern about my Health and Morals. I answered their Letter to assure them that, by God's Grace, I never will do any thing that shall bring their grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave. They are the kindest Parents that a Girl could ever be blessed with -- I'm so lucky to have them to care about me the Way that they do.

At work today, I was told that I would be paid next Friday (a Week from today) for this Week, and a small Christmas Bonus would be added to my Salary. I think I'll get poor Jo-Jo an Umbrella with the extra Money; the last Time that I saw him, he looked as though he had almost drowned in a Downpour of Rain!

Diary, Something is bothering me, though. It seems that, as Mrs. F. becomes less cold towards me, Mr. Jones becomes even more friendly (if that's possible!). It seems that he goes out of his way to talk to me and to touch my Hand or my Arm; in Short, Diary, his friendly Manner is beginning to frighten me a Little. I know that he is a Bachelor (admittedly, a very dashing and wealthy one, at that), and he probably has a very comfortable Apartment. Well, I will just rely on God's Help to keep me safe from any terrible Situations that may be forced upon me. I will die a thousand Deaths, rather than be dishonest in any way.

December 17, 1973

Dear Diary,

My Week-end was devoted to cleaning and to grocery-shopping and to attending Church Services. I know that this doesn't sound very exciting, yet the Knowledge that I was doing all of it by myself gave my Activities all of the excitement of an Opening Night at the Theater.

But today at Work, Something disturbing occurred. Mr. Jones extended a personal Invitation to me to attend the Office Christmas Party this coming Friday. He winked at me when he promised that we would have a 'very good Time together.' -- I was so confounded at these Words, you might have beat me down with a Feather. For, you must think, there was no Answer to be made to this. So, mistaking my Silence for Agreement, he hugged my Shoulders and said Something about 'looking forward to it', but I know that I certainly am not. Mummy's Letter came today, and in it she discussed my Safety amid all of the Evils of a big City. Does she really know that Mr. Jones, this very Gentleman (yes, I must call him Gentleman, tho' he has fallen from the merit of that Title) has degraded himself to offer Freedoms to his poor Servant? She always could tell when I had a Problem or was worried about Something.

Well, I will just have to do my best to avoid Mr. Jones all Week and hope that he leaves me alone. God, I hope, will give me his Grace; and I will not, if I can help it, make myself too uneasy; for I hope there is no Occasion to warrant such anxiety.

As for Mrs. F., she's almost civil to me now. It makes me glow Inside to know how much she is getting to like me. Her last Day at Work will be Friday, and I would so hate for her to leave while still holding a Grudge against me.

December 19, 1973

Dear Diary,

Merry Christmas! (almost, anyway). I am in a very 'Christmassy' mood -- I helped decorate the Office this Afternoon with Paper Santas and Snowflakes, and contributed a bit of money for a Christmas Present from the Office Staff for Mr. Jones. Plans were also being formed for the Party on Friday, although I admit that I could not join everyone Else in enthusiastically talking about it. A Sign was posted in the Hallway that reminds us to 'bring your own.' I guess I'll bake some Sugar Cookies; I do hope that we have Cocoa to drink -- (Cocoa and Sugar Cookies belong together at a Party as much as the Guests do!

Mr. Jones must have noticed that I've been avoiding him as much as I possibly could today, because he asked me What he had said to offend me. I told him that I wasn't avoiding him, but that I had been very busy all Day (and I had been). At any rate, he again referred to the 'good Time' that we are going to have at the Party; but before he could get in another meaningful Wink or touch my Hand, I merely nodded in a noncommittal Manner and walked quickly away. His Personality is very Charming and Disarming, but he is a little too whirlwindish for me. I mean, I have never let a Man kiss me yet (I have never known Anyone well enough to feel that I would want to marry him), so I am sure that I don't know where Mr. Jones feels he can acquire such Liberties as he is desirous to

take. Well, Mummy and Daddy have warned me of his Type often enough, so I must beware. Please, God, watch over me....

December 20, 1973

Dear Diary,

I am all a-quiver! At Work today, Mr. Jones hinted that he had a 'special' Present for me that he would give me at the Party to-morrow. I do love Surprises -- especially at Christmas. Mummy wrote to tell me that Jo-Jo would be home for Christmas Dinner, and she asked me if I was going to bring his Present with me when I come to visit. I must remember to buy the Umbrella soon that I have decided to purchase for him. I would hate not to have a Gift to give him, especially since Everyone is being so nice to me.

Mrs. Flanders began cleaning out her Desk today. It was so sad to watch her, knowing that to-morrow will be her last Day at Work. I am going to miss the dear, sweet old Lady -- she is a just, good Woman, and next to Daddy and Mummy and Jo-Jo, the best Friend I have in the World.

To-morrow is also the appointed day for the Christmas Party. Oh! this frightful To-morrow! how I dread it!

December 21, 1973

Dear Diary,

Something terrible happened today at the Party -- I can neither write as I should do, nor let it alone; for to whom but you can I vent my Grievs, and keep my poor Heart from bursting! Wicked, Wicked Man! -- I have no Patience left me! And now I am afraid that I shall never be able to face Mummy and Daddy because of it. It all began this Morning, right after I had watered the Plants on the window Ledge. Mr. Jones came up quietly behind me and slipped his arm around my Waist, just to tell me 'good morning.' Well, I was very

frightened by this bold Action -- so frightened, in Fact, that I jumped away from him, out-of reach, and from that Position, bid him a respectful 'good morning.' He seemed surprised that I was scared, but only asked me to come into his Office to take some Dictation when I was through with my gardening Duties. Of course, I followed his implicit Command (after all, he is my Boss and doing what he requests of me is Part of my Job), and, after getting my Notebook and Pencil a short time later, I walked as calmly as I could into his Office. As soon as I sat down, he came over to me, took Both of my Hands into his, and complimented me on the way that I was dressed. Then, he began to touch my Face and gently smooth my Hair; I began to perceive that he really was not ready to dictate Whatever he had wanted to, but when I stood up to leave, he -- he -- (oh! it is still painful to think of it!) he kissed me! I was so frightened by his Forwardness that I ran right out of his Office into the Ladies' Lounge and cried for almost an Hour in Despair.

When I returned to my Desk, I was still confused and frightened, but much more determined to avoid Mr. Jones at all Cost. However, at the Afternoon Party, he tried to kiss me again, but when I backed away from him, he grabbed me roughly by the Shoulders, shook me brusquely, and angrily said that he was 'tired of playing Games' with me and some other Things that I did not understand. He only ended up spoiling the entire Party for me by forcing me to drink some evil-tasting Punch. He became very angry when I started choking on it, and mumbled Something about me 'paying for playing hard-to-get' (whatever that means) and stalked off alone. I did not see him at all during the last Hour of the Party, so I hope that he had Time to think about his terrible Actions and realize the Dishonor he has brought upon me. At any rate, I am going to go shopping with Mrs. Flanders to-morrow Afternoon -- I need to try and forget about what happened today, and Jo-Jo really needs an Umbrella!"

It was at this point that Pamela's diary abruptly ended. P.D. drew a long breath, closed his eyes tightly, and began to think.

"Obviously," he said to himself, "I must talk with Mr. Jones immediately to find out just what he has to say about his new secretary."

P.D. thumbed through the dog-eared telephone directory that lay conveniently on his desk, and turned to the business listings. "Allworthy and Jones, Merchandise Unlimited." Within minutes, Mr. Jones had agreed to see the sleuth immediately. After explaining to his efficient secretary all of the background information that he wanted her to secure, P.D. set out at a scurrying pace. As he darted through the ever-continuing rain, P.D. considered the degree of difficulty that this problem of the missing secretary posed; earlier in the year, he had solved a case in three hours flat. "That would be a nice record to break before the end of the year," P.D. mused to himself. It was with this goal in mind that he arrived at the office of Mr. Thomas Jones, Pamela's employer.

After refusing Mr. Jones' smooth offer of tea and scones with his usual dietary explanation ("I'm trying to fight the battle of the bulge, sir."), P.D. came quickly to the point of his visit.

"Mr. Jones, when was the last time that you saw Pamela Andrews, your newly-hired secretary?"

"Friday afternoon, the twenty-first of December, I believe it was, at our office Christmas party," he replied.

"How did you spend the week-end that followed?"

"I went to stay with Mr. Allworthy, my generous benefactor and retired senior partner."

"Tell me, Mr. Jones, you must know a great deal about people in general, being a successful businessman. What impression did you receive of your secretary in the short time that you employed her?"

After clearing his throat, Jones replied carefully, "I thought that she was

a rather sweet young thing, not very experienced as a secretary, but willing enough to learn."

"Not very experienced?" repeated P.D. "How do you mean that, Mr. Jones?"

"I merely mean that Mrs. Moll Flanders, my former secretary, had to explain nearly every minute detail to Pamela concerning her duties as a secretary. That's all, sir."

Mr. Jones was beginning to look uncomfortable. P.D., noting this gradual loss of poise, commented:

"I understand that you thought that Pamela was inexperienced in other ways, too, Mr. Jones, and that you became rather impatient when faced with her constant evasions of your overtures. Is this not so, sir?"

"Indeed, sir," cried Jones, "I cannot censure a passion which I feel at this instant in the highest degree. Sometimes, I do allow my frustrations to get the best of me -- yet, I would never do anything to harm her, if that's what you're implying, sir. No, sir, not me, sir."

P.D. looked pensive for a moment. Then, nodding to himself, he addressed the businessman once again.

"One last question, Mr. Jones. Who is your secretary, now that Pamela has disappeared? I don't think that I saw her when I came in."

Looking a bit relieved at the prospect of ending the interview, Mr. Jones replied,

"Mrs. Flanders was good enough to come back to the company as soon as she knew of this unfortunate happening. I wish I could help you further, sir, but frankly, I wouldn't know where to begin looking for Pamela if I were you, sir. And yet this mystery must be solved quickly, for things of this nature make a quick progress when once they get abroad."

"You've been a great help to me, Mr. Jones, and believe me, I've already begun the search. Do you mind if I speak with Mrs. Flanders for a few minutes while on my way out?"

"No, not at all, sir. Take all of the time that you need to with her. I am sure that she is just as concerned as I am that you find out what has become of our dear Pamela."

"Well, I am sure that I will, sir," P.D. stated confidently, repeating the reassurance that he had just given to Joseph Andrews, Pamela's distraught brother, a short time earlier and which, if you will recall, dear reader, we thoroughly criticized him and all humanity for. "Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Jones. I truly appreciate it."

P.D. walked out of Jones' office into the reception area. Glancing around, he noted an unoccupied desk to the right of one which was presently utilized by an elderly woman of insignificant features. As P.D. approached her, she looked up at him and nodded in assent to his question,

"Are you Mrs. Moll Flanders?"

Upon receiving this signal of affirmation, he proceeded.

"I am P.D. Queue, Private Investigator. I have been hired to look into the disappearance of Pamela Andrews, a former secretary of Mr. Jones. Would you be willing to answer a few questions concerning this problem?"

"Well, Mr. Queue, I would really like to help you but I am not sure that I can tell you anything that would be useful to your investigation. I was supposed to retire on the twenty-first of December, so it was my duty to train my replacement which, of course, was Pamela. She was a very sweet, eager-to-please young lady, although not too terribly bright and, I am afraid, she was not very efficient as a secretary, either. I am afraid that she just wouldn't have succeeded very well here after my retirement. I can imagine the chaos that would develop if she were to implement the filing system that she had conveniently developed for herself."

"Oh, really, madam? How can you be so sure of her immediate failure?" P.D. asked.

Mrs. Flanders looked at him with a surprised expression.

"My goodness, young man, she could not water my plants properly nor could she eat her lunch without leaving crumbs scattered about her desk, to say nothing of her atrocious spelling habits (all of those capital letters just strawn about everywhere!) which of course led to her terrible system of filing. It was really a relief to be asked back again to work for Mr. Jones. Indeed, sir, it was."

"I have another question, Mrs. Flanders. When was the last time that you saw Pamela?"

"Friday afternoon, sir, at the office Christmas party. We were supposed to go shopping on the following day, but I happened to receive a letter from my brother which stated that he was coming to see me on Saturday. So, I sent a message to Pamela Friday evening to cancel our shopping plans. That was the last time that I had any contact with her, sir."

"Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Flanders. I am sure that you have been very helpful."

As P.D. walked away, his attention was attracted by a large, black umbrella that was carefully posed against a corner of the outer office. Next to it stood a coat rack which held only a woman's rain coat. P.D. turned to face Mrs. Flanders once again and asked,

"Excuse me, again, madam, but to whom does that coat and umbrella belong?"

Without hesitating, Mrs. Flanders answered, "Oh, they're both mine, sir. The umbrella was given to me by Pamela as a Christmas gift at our Christmas party. Handsome, isn't it, sir?"

"A man's umbrella -- that's a rather unusual gift for you to receive, is it not, Mrs. Flanders?"

"I guess so, sir. It's hard to know what to expect from young people now. But, a gift is a gift, isn't it, sir?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," P.D. replied. "Again, thank you for your time. Good by, Mrs. Flanders."

P.D. walked pensively into the hallway and headed straight for the public telephone which was conveniently mounted on a wall in the foyer. He made three calls -- one to Joseph Andrews, one to his efficient secretary, and one to the corner drugstore lunch counter. Being a softie for chop suey and egg rolls, the special lunch for the day, and being astounded by the information that he had gleaned through his other two calls, P.D. decided to stop for lunch and organize his thoughts. He walked the remaining half-block, and, having reached his destination, he entered the small restaurant. Finding the lunch counter to be completely filled, he moved to a booth, ordered his Chinese lunch, and began to think. His food came in a reasonable amount of time, and it was after he had eaten his third fortune cookie that Mrs. Flanders walked into the lunch room. Being unable to find a seat at the counter, she asked P.D. if he would mind sharing his booth with her. P.D., always willing to prove that chivalry was not dead yet, agreed readily.

"You look rather strained, Mrs. Flanders," P.D. not-so-tactfully observed. "Is there anything that I can do for you?"

"No, no, I'll be all right as soon as I eat something. I haven't been sleeping well at night, lately."

"Is there something that's troubling you?"

"No, no, everything will be just fine." Mrs. Flanders nervously toyed with the fork that the waitress had placed on her left, turning it on its side, then on its back, then on its other side, and then back again.

"Mrs. Flanders, are you sure that there's nothing on your mind that you wish to discuss? I am a good listener. I might be able to help you."

Looking anxious and distraught at P.D.'s thoughtful offer, she replied,

"Oh, no, sir; thank you very much for your concern, but I am sure that

everything will be fine, sir."

"Yes, Mrs. Flanders, I am inclined to agree with you. Pamela is probably very comfortable in her captivity."

Mrs. Flanders looked at him sharply. "Pamela? Who said anything about her?"

"Well, that is who you are worried about, isn't it? I am sure that she will quickly get used to the fish and rice diet that is so popular in China,"

P.D. continued confidently.

"Why, I am sure that I don't know what you are talking about, Mr. Queue. What makes you think that she is in China, of all places?"

"That's where your visiting brother lives, isn't it? You know, the one who owns the fortune cookie factory in which Pamela is being held prisoner."

Mrs. Flanders was stupefied. She could not say anything for two and seven-eighths minutes, thereby giving P.D. time to eat his fourth and final fortune cookie. Finally, she gained enough composure to sputter,

"How did you find out?"

P.D., taking his time about revealing his thorough methods of investigation, leaned back in the booth and slyly looked across the table at the near-tears Moll Flanders. Without giving any credit to the vital role that his efficient secretary played in his deductions of this solution, he stated,

"Madam, all of the facts fit together. You were to retire from your position as Mr. Jones' secretary. You resented having to train your replacement, having to watch her daily as she moved closer and closer into the position of esteem that you knew would very soon no longer be yours. Yes, you even were jealous of the attention that Mr. Jones paid to Pamela because you could remember when you had once been treated in a similar manner by Mr. Allworthy, Mr. Jones' retired partner. Yes, Mrs. Flanders, although you may have successfully covered up your true feelings towards Pamela, they were never completely submerged."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Mr. Queue," the tired old woman sobbed. "My

conscience has been uneasy all along. After the act was committed, the wretched boldness of spirit which I had acquired abated and conscious guilt began to flow in my mind. In short, I began to think, and to think indeed is one real advance from hell to heaven."

Moll Flanders felt very ashamed of her petty attitude toward Pamela Andrews, and fully regretted ever taking part in the evil act. Mr. Queue viewed her with pity; he understood how she felt and why she acted as she had; with kindness, he asked her if she wanted him to continue with his revelation of facts which they both knew to be true. While attempting to regain some composure, she encouraged him to reveal the whole truth and thereby allow it to come out in the open and relieve her anxious mind. P.D. proceeded.

"As you told me, you received a notice from your brother concerning his visit. However, you did not send a message to cancel your shopping plans to Pamela. Instead, you unexpectedly called on her on Friday evening -- that is the time that Pamela purchased the umbrella which you now have in your possession. However, instead of returning to her own apartment, you persuaded Pamela to accompany you home; your brother was waiting for both of you there so that he could take Pamela back to China with him as you had previously arranged. Although labor is cheap there, you knew that he would appreciate having slave labor for no payment at all. And, Mrs. Flanders, that is where Pamela is now, as the messages from my fortune cookies will prove."

P.D. handed the four thin slips of paper to Mrs. Flanders, upon which were typed these words:

"Help! I'm being held captive in this fortune cookie factory! Please tell Mummy and Daddy that I love them. Love, Pamela."

Mrs. Flanders' pale face became totally devoid of color after reading the identical messages; she murmured, "I did not mean for any harm to come to her. I'm so very sorry this ever occurred..."

P.D., always on the ball, quickly caught the woman before she fainted into her fried rice. After calling for a waitress to take care of Mrs. Flanders, he paid his bill and scurried out of the drugstore. As he stepped out into the cold December rain, he glanced at his watch. Three and a half hours had passed since he had been approached by Joseph Andrews. Well, he thought to himself, I didn't break my record this time. Maybe there is something to get excited about concerning the coming year after all....

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